

EQIP Quail Priority Area

NEW to Ohio, this priority area offers increased opportunity for landowners in select Ohio townships to get funding for habitat improvements that benefit bobwhite quail, white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, songbirds, and more!



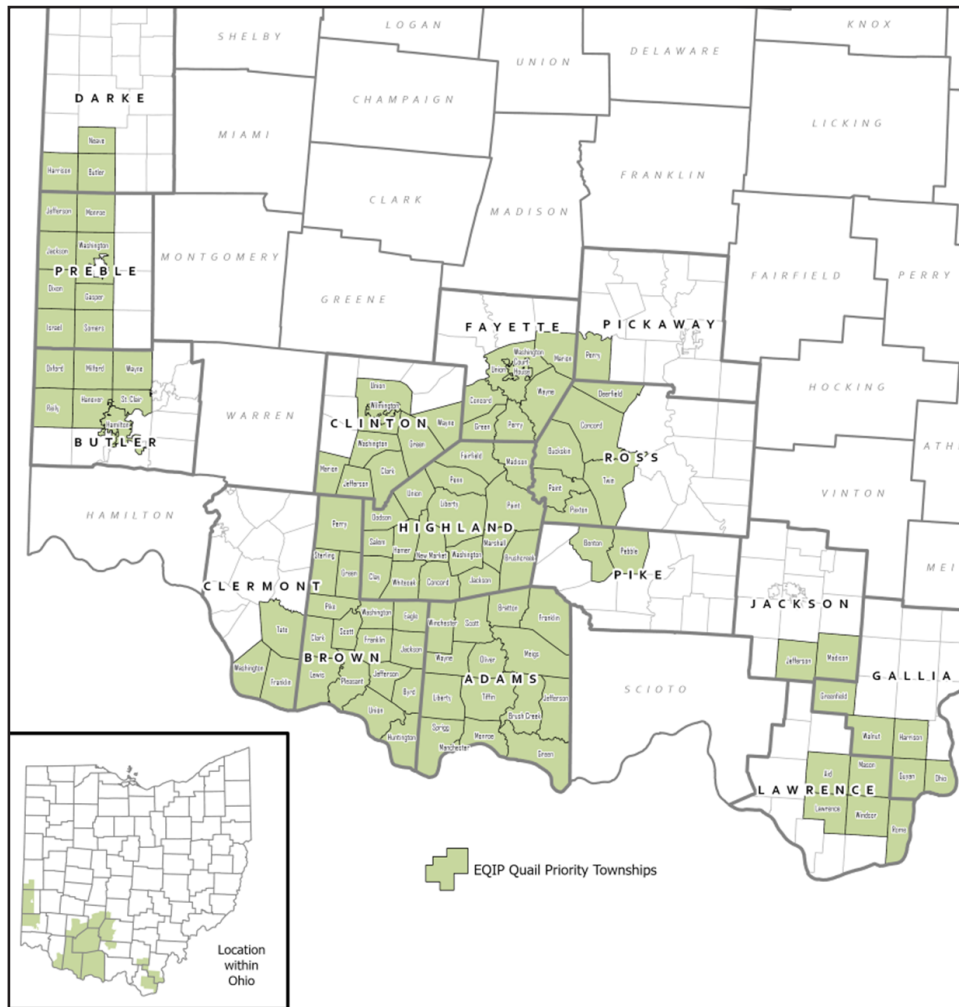
Introduction

Northern bobwhite quail were once iconically found on farmsteads across Ohio. Changes in farming practices, introduction of non-native grasses, loss of fencerows and other brushy areas, and forest succession have all played a role in population reduction.

The northern bobwhite and other wildlife species dependent on grassland habitat are in a steep 80% decline in Ohio and nationwide.

The new Quail Priority Area is part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and will increase the likelihood of funding habitat projects to landowners in the designated area (see map). These regions have been selected as they already host core populations of bobwhite quail (Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife population abundance surveys).

A few eligible habitat projects include native shrub establishment, pollinator habitat, prairie restoration, edge feathering, and invasive species removal. Regardless of whether landowners' goals are to see an increase in deer and turkey, produce more honey, or pollinate more crops, incorporating one of these practices will receive priority consideration for funding.



Why is Edge Habitat Important?

Edge habitat is the transition zone between two cover types, such as between grassland and shrub/forestland habitat. Quail often nest, raise broods, and overwinter in distinctly different areas and need multiple habitat types to thrive, as do many other species. Edge habitat is important for quail as it can offer nesting, brooding, and wintering habitat in close proximity.

In lieu of vast prairies dotted with shrub thickets, Ohio's edge habitat typically comes in the form of forest edges, fencerows, and odd brushy areas on farms. Agricultural advancements have reduced or eliminated many fencerows, and forest edges have changed from a gradual mixing of grass, shrubs, and young trees to abrupt edges between farm fields and mature forests, with no transition zone.

Establishing or improving edge habitat on your land may involve planting diverse mixes of native shrubs, forbs, or grass; or may be as simple as removing some invasive species along fencerows and forest edges. Either way you can be certain it will benefit quail, deer, turkey, and many other species.





Native Shrub Establishment

Native shrubs, such as dogwood, blackberry, raspberry, crabapple, and American plum provide a unique source of cover that does not exist on many farms anymore. Native shrub thickets provide wildlife with a refuge from predators and winter weather, and an irreplaceable food source for many birds and mammals.

Pollinator Habitat

Establishing native wildflowers, legumes and grasses will provide suitable habitat for pollinating insects. These native plants create rigid structures that provide great habitat for bobwhites and wild turkeys to rear their broods. The native insects that are attracted to these plants make a quality food source for turkey poults and quail chicks, which is the majority of their diet during their first several weeks of life.

Prairie Restoration

Prairie Restoration is manipulating existing cover to restore an ecosystem that has been degraded. Restoration may include prescribed fire, invasive species removal, or brush management. Native grasses grow in bunches, rather than the sod-forming structure of many cool season grasses (like tall fescue). Bunches of native grasses create spaces at ground level that are suitable for wildlife to nest, navigate, and escape from predators. The bunch grass structure allows native legumes and wildflowers to grow within the gaps, which compliment the native grasses. Grassland habitat is critical for bobwhite quail, and other grassland birds; but are also used by cottontail rabbits, wild turkeys, and white-tailed deer.

Edge Feathering

Edge Feathering is the strategy of harvesting trees along a forest edge to expose sunlight to the forest edge. The sunlight then promotes many species of native shrubs and small trees to create thickets between the forest edge and adjacent field. This is one very good way to promote more habitat that is suitable for bobwhite quail, American woodcock, and bedding cover for white tailed deer. These native shrubs thickets provide escape cover, winter cover, and loafing cover to bobwhite quail.

Invasive Species Removal

Invasive plant species are one of the largest threats to our native biodiversity. In fact, species like tall fescue are often noted as one of the primary factors in the decline of bobwhite quail. Invasive shrubs like autumn olive and bush honeysuckle now dominate areas like fencerows and forest edges, that were once very quality bobwhite quail habitat. Removing these species can be done mechanically, chemically, biologically, or a combination of those methods. In many cases the native plant species respond promptly, eliminating the need to artificially replant the treated areas.



Get Started!

Contact your

- Local USDA Service Center
- Ohio Division of Wildlife Private Lands Biologist
- Quail Forever Farm Bill Biologist

OR

- Grasslands & Grazing Coordinator Jason Jones at 937-423-0904



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